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Hamilton Community
Council on Employment of
the Disabled.

Local coordination of job
placement services for the
disabled.

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Project Report

**LOCAL COORDINATION OF JOB
PLACEMENT SERVICES FOR THE
DISABLED**

Prepared for

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Toronto, March 1985
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INTRODUCTION

The Hamilton Community Council on the Employment of the Disabled (CCED) commissioned this study in November 1983. Our mandate was to:

Examine options and develop recommendations for a model approach to local coordination of job placement services for disabled persons.

According to our terms of reference, "job placement services" was defined broadly to include both placement and supportive activities to promote job placement and job retention. "Disability" included physical, developmental, and psychiatric impairments.

In March 1984, we had completed much of the baseline work on the study. This included an exhaustive review of documentation on the turbulent history of the Hamilton Affirmative Action Project (HAAP) leading to the establishment of the CCED and this study. This review was supplemented by interviews with key persons involved in the HAAP. We also conducted extensive personal interviews with the list of relevant agencies supplied by our client. These interviews were designed to provide a description of current services in the Hamilton area. As well, we initiated our unsuccessful search for ideal service models for job placement of disabled persons.

Our interviews with key informants convinced us that the coordination of job placement for disabled persons is not an issue in Hamilton. CEIC/PATH is already the sole placement agency. In light of this information, we suggested that our client might like to redirect or conclude the study. The research committee directed us to proceed as planned.

The next step involved personal interviews with a purposive sample of employers, structured according to their experience with the employment of disabled persons. The list of employers, to be provided by the research committee, was not forthcoming. In September 1984, we learned that the Council had been struggling with its very existence for several months, but was now reconstituted. This study was not a priority during this period of time.

In December 1984, we presented an interim report of our findings to a new Executive group. At this meeting, it was decided that the study should be concluded.

This report presents the findings that lead to the conclusion of the study.

II

HIGHLIGHTS

This study was intended to "Examine options and develop recommendations for a model approach to local coordination of job placement services for disabled persons."

The study was concluded when it was found that there is only one job placement agency for disabled people in Hamilton — CEIC, primarily through its Outreach program Placement Assistance for the Trained Handicapped (PATH).

Our description of job placement and support services for disabled persons in Hamilton highlights the different orientations of each agency. Agencies differ in terms of their definition of the client who may be the employer, the disabled person, or both. The recipient of services determines the kinds of services and the type of staff needed to provide these services.

Respondents believed that single purpose agencies are more successful than those that try to combine job readiness activities, job placement, and/or advocacy. Agencies differ in the amount of work they are willing to do for the client versus with the client. Agencies serving hard-to-place clients tend to do more work for the client.

Our findings indicate that each agency in Hamilton has a unique role to play. Competition among agencies is based on faulty comparisons of different target populations, different definitions of a job placement, and the varied backgrounds of agency staff.

Five service needs related to the job placement of disabled persons were identified:

- ▶ Ex-psychiatric clients are not well served.
- ▶ More client assessment services are needed.
- ▶ Job analysis experts are needed.
- ▶ Better availability of aids and devices.
- ▶ Support for job stabilization and follow-up services.

PATH is perceived as the sole job placement resource for disabled persons in Hamilton. To increase its effectiveness, PATH needs staff with a background in industry, marketing, and job analysis. It should widen its mandate to include short-term placements when it is anticipated that these may become long-term jobs. It needs more support from the Chedoke Vocational Assessment Unit in terms of good functional assessments of clients.

The real issue is not coordinated job placement for disabled persons, but job preparation. Five barriers to job readiness are discussed. These include problems related to:

- ▶ Education and training.
- ▶ Work history or exposure to appropriate work choices.
- ▶ Life skills, daily living skills, social skills.
- ▶ Multiple handicaps.
- ▶ Transportation and housing.

The Community Council on the Employment of the Disabled may find it within its mandate to lobby for changes in the mandate and funding mechanisms of programs to support essential job preparation needs of disabled clients before they present themselves for job placement.

III

HAMILTON JOB PLACEMENT SERVICES FOR DISABLED PERSONS

In this chapter, we describe job placement and support services for disabled persons in Hamilton. The descriptions are based on our interviews with key informants in each agency and with one representative from each of the labour and employer constituencies. Respondents, selected by the CCED, are listed in the Appendix.

A. JOB PLACEMENT IS COORDINATED

Our major finding, and the reason for concluding the study is that only one agency -- Canada Employment and Immigration Commission (CEIC), primarily through its Outreach program PATH, provides job placement services for disabled persons.

Other agencies are involved in job placement for specific, hard to place populations. For example, Workers' Compensation Board (WCB) serves injured workers whose employers contribute to the funding of the Board. The Citizen Action Group (CAG), another Outreach project of CEIC, provides services to youth and other hard to place clients, but specifically excludes disabled persons. Vocational Rehabilitation Services (VRS) has a small role in job placement, but will discontinue this service shortly. All agencies interviewed identified PATH as the only job placement service for disabled persons.

B. DIFFERENT SUPPORT SERVICES FOR DIFFERENT POPULATIONS

Agencies we interviewed provide a range of services in support of job placement, but most do not actually place disabled persons in long-term, permanent jobs. Services provided as of March 1984 are summarized in Exhibit III-1.

Virtually all job candidates are registered with CEIC to obtain income support and access to training funds and employer incentives. Many disabled clients are also registered with VRS for counselling and access to aids/devices. Aside from these services, each agency we interviewed deals with a specific population, as illustrated in the last line of the Exhibit. No agency, except CEIC, serves ex-psychiatric clients.

C. DIFFERENT PHILOSOPHIES, RESPONSIBILITIES, AND OPPORTUNITIES

Respondents pointed out that agencies have different views of their responsibilities and different philosophies about how to serve their clients. These are discussed below.

1. Definition of the client

The employer who funds WCB is the primary client of this agency. WCB is accountable to the employer and not to the disabled person. In contrast, the disabled person is the sole client and primary concern of VRS. PATH, however, considers both the employer and the disabled person as clients and feels an equal responsibility to satisfy both parties.

The definition of the client determines the types of services offered and the staffing needs of an agency. These are discussed below.

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EXHIBIT III-1 Employment support services provided by Hamilton agencies

	CEIC	PATH	CAG	Chedoke	VRS	WCB	CHS	THAT	ETC	Amity
Advocacy							X	X	X	X
Referral to other agencies	Training	Training	Training	X	X	Some	X	X		X
Assessment	Fund			X	X	X	X		X	
Job Placement:										
- Long-term	X	X	Some		Discontinuing this service	X		Incidental from work stations	Minimal/Incidental	
- Short-term	X		X						X	
Job Finding:										
- Door knocking		X	X						X	
- Strategic assistance		X	X		X	X	X			
- Lists of opportunities	X				X	Some	Some		Some	
Employer incentives	X	Through CEIC				X				
Job analysis		X	X			X	Hearing			
Job redesign		X		X		Some				
Services to disabled:	X									
- Income support					X	X				
- Aids/devices (incl. interpreting)				X	Purchase	Purchase	X			
- Counselling		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
- Job search skills (resumes, interview skills, search, etc.)		X	X			X				
- Life skills (coping with disability)/social skills				Some						
- Literacy/education	Fund	Fund	Fund			Some	X	X	X	X
- Job skills training	Fund	Fund	Fund			Fund		X	X	X
- Job stabilization (active follow-up)		Some	Some			Some	Some	Incidental	Some	
Population Served	All	Physical	Other hard to place	Physical	All	Injured workers	Hearing impaired	Physical/developmental	Developmental	Developmental

2. Role and staffing requirements

Several respondents pointed out that different agency roles require different staff skills and that sometimes agencies were not staffed appropriately. In essence, agencies in support roles (e.g., VRS, Canadian Hearing Society) need social workers on staff. But agencies whose goal is job placement (e.g., PATH, CEIC, WCB) should be staffed by people with experience in industry and excellent marketing skills. Their job is to understand enough about an employer's needs and job requirements that they can market or sell a disabled person's skills to an employer.

Currently, VRS is staffed primarily by social workers; the WCB prefers staff who are experienced in industry. CAG hires staff experienced in industry who have an interest in social reform. PATH has a commitment to hire disabled persons to staff the agency. Several respondents felt that PATH would be strengthened by releasing it from its commitment to hire disabled persons and encouraging the employment of more staff with industry experience.

3. Multi-purpose or single purpose agencies

Respondents agreed that single purpose agencies were most successful. An agency should either be devoted to job readiness and support or to job placement or to advocacy, but should not try to combine these roles. The failure of the United Placement Service (UPS) is attributed, in part, to its attempt to be all things to all people.

Ideally, some agencies should concentrate on job preparation, job readiness and support. These agencies should deliver the job-ready client to a job placement agency.

4. Dependent/independent clients

All respondents agreed that disabled persons need to become as independent as possible. The separation of job placement agencies from support/preparation services is seen as one way of encouraging independence for the disabled client. By the time the client is job-ready, he/she should be near maximum independence. Job placement agencies should not do the job seeking for the client; rather, they should assist the client to do his/her own job search.

Disabled persons have varying expectations about the amount of work an agency should do for them, versus with them, in finding a job. Agencies differ in the amount of "door knocking" they will do for a disabled client. CAG, PATH, and the Employment Training Centre (ETC) are more willing to locate jobs for clients than are WCB or CEIC.

5. Competition among agencies

Observers of the job placement process usually comment on the sense of competition between agencies. Indeed, that observation was part of the motivation for this study. As shown in Exhibit III-1, each agency in Hamilton has a specific role to play and comparing agencies is like comparing apples and oranges.

Nevertheless, such comparisons were a feature of our interviews. Faulty comparisons that engender competition and even hostility between agencies are the result of two primary problems: incomparable placement populations and targets and the varied backgrounds of agency staff. The reputation of an agency is based largely on the number of job placements made and the personal reputations of staff members.

a) Targets

Although most agencies are reluctant to admit it, agencies are measured by the number of job placements they make. This system creates a number of problems and engenders considerable hostility among agencies.

Each agency defines placement in a different way. For example, PATH counts only long-term jobs and is viewed by some as "unsuccessful" because long-term jobs for disabled persons require considerable time and effort. CAG, also a CEIC Outreach program, counts short-term and long-term jobs, placement in training programs and youth placements in short-term or part-time work as "placements". The high placement rate this system produces makes it appear "very successful" to some.

The agencies serve different clients. PATH serves only disabled clients who are probably the hardest people to place. CAG does not serve disabled clients and some of its clients, e.g., youth, are relatively easy to place. The WCB serves workers with skills and a work history, who are still easier to place. And, under WCB, employers have an obligation to retain a worker if possible. The number of job placements may be a useful bureaucratic measure of "success", but it does not serve the reputation of agencies well.

The "numbers game" has another negative impact. It encourages agencies to do as many job placements as possible rather than the best job placements possible. It rewards quantity, not quality. Agencies are encouraged to accept the most employable clients rather than all clients in need.

It would be helpful if agencies and funding sources had a better understanding of the unique services each provides and if recognition were based on good work instead of numbers.

b) Staff

Rehabilitation work is not a profession in which workers share a common educational background. They have no credibility with each other based on a shared conceptual framework or common jargon or theory. Skills are highly variable. Loyalty to a profession is replaced by an attachment to a particular job in a particular agency.

The reputation of an agency depends to a large extent on the personality of the worker. Reputations change as staff come and go. Reputations can be enhanced or destroyed by the "horror stories" told by clients about how badly they were treated by an agency. Staff rarely check these stories with their colleagues in other agencies; rather, they are used to reinforce existing belief systems.

Respondents also noted the wide range of salaries, training opportunities, and other benefits available in different agencies. Variable staff compensation for comparable work heightens the dissonance between agencies.

The combination of the "numbers game" and the fragility of agency reputations support inter-agency competition and hostility. In fact, every agency we interviewed has a unique place in the service system. Few recognize this uniqueness.

Several respondents commented on the fact that agencies operate in relative isolation. Staff have little face-to-face contact and few opportunities to discuss their work or their problems with staff in other agencies. No one seems to have the energy to arrange shared experiences. One respondent suggested that the Council might play a role in bringing agency staff together for informal meetings or meals at which they could get to know each other.

D. SERVICE GAPS AND NEEDS

Respondents identified five service-needs related to the job placement of disabled persons. Each is discussed below.

1. Ex-psychiatric clients are not well served

Specialized job placement services are not provided for the ex-psychiatric client. Most agencies simply avoid this client group. Those who have tried to work with them are frustrated with the lack of community emergency support available for these clients.

2. More client assessment services are needed

Special agencies provide assessments of client functioning according to disability, e.g., Chedoke (physical), CHS (hearing), CNIB (vision), Amity (mentally retarded), etc.

Job placement agencies are enthusiastic about the services provided by Chedoke because it is especially skilled at identifying aids and devices to assist a client in employment. There is a long waiting list at Chedoke. Agencies see a need to improve the availability of this service.

3. Job analysis experts are needed

Many respondents identified a need for an occupational therapist trained in job analysis and especially in the specification of aids and devices to modify work for disabled persons. Some agency staff have learned informally to do job analysis, but they cannot possibly master the growing number of aids and devices available for work modification. Agencies would like to share expertise in this area. The service would have to have public funding in order to be accessible to service-providers.

4. Better availability of aids and devices

Once aids and devices are identified as necessary, a better system is needed for their provision.

Currently, VRS provides funds to purchase aids. However, the system requires that the individual or the employer purchase the device and demonstrate its utility before funding is approved. Approvals can take many months and result in financial hardship for the client.

5. Support for job stabilization and follow-up services

The importance of stabilization or follow-up support for newly employed disabled persons is not recognized by funding sources. Often, a minor adjustment or a small misunderstanding may mean the difference between a successful or unsuccessful job placement. A job stabilization worker can mediate small difficulties between the employer and the worker so that the worker does not simply walk away from the problem and return to unemployment.

Currently, stabilization services are provided on an incidental basis. No agency can afford to devote staff time to this function, even though all recognized that it can make the critical difference in the retention of a job.

E. THE IDEAL JOB PLACEMENT SERVICE FOR DISABLED PERSONS

Respondents identified PATH as the sole job placement service for disabled persons in Hamilton. But many respondents noted that PATH does not have the resources it needs to do the job well.

Services provided by PATH should include job search skills, job analysis, job redesign and the specification of aids and devices, and job stabilization. Only job-ready clients should be referred to PATH. It should not be involved in personal counselling, advocacy, or job-readiness training.

To provide these services, the staff should have a background in industry. They need expertise in marketing and job analysis.

To bolster its image by increasing the number of job placements it makes, PATH should do short-term placements when it is anticipated that these may become long-term jobs.

Since PATH relies on good functional assessments of clients, assessment services at Chedoke should be increased to an adequate level.

PATH is already perceived as the placement resource for disabled persons in Hamilton. The service needs improvements to increase its effectiveness, but coordination of job placement is not the problem. What is the issue?

A. JOB READINESS IS THE ISSUE

CONSIDER THE FOLLOWING FACTORS:

- Education and training
- Work history or exposure to workplace work habits
- Life skills, daily living skills, social skills
- Multiple handicaps
- Transportation and housing

IV

THE ISSUE

Since the coordination of job placement services for disabled persons is not the issue, what is? Both PATH and the WCB stated that all too often disabled persons sent for job placement are not ready for work. And it is not the disability, per se, that is the problem.

Finding a job is easy. Finding a job-ready client with realistic expectations is the hard part.

Often, it is not the disability per se that is the problem. It is social skills, education, work skills, transportation, and unrealistic expectations that stand in the way.

PATH may be a fine marketing organization, but it is being handed raw material. The manufacturing stage is not there.

A. JOB READINESS IS THE ISSUE

Candidates are not job-ready because of problems related to:

- ▶ Education and training.
- ▶ Work history or exposure to appropriate work choices.
- ▶ Life skills, daily living skills, social skills.
- ▶ Multiple handicaps.
- ▶ Transportation and housing.

Services that have responsibility for preparing clients for work cite a number of barriers to fulfilling the expectations of job placement agencies. These are discussed below.

1. Education and training

Disabled persons who use special job placement agencies are often poorly educated and/or trained. The funding mandates of support programs are a very real barrier to the kind of education many need.

Literacy programs, (below grade 10) are not available, largely because they are not funded by anyone. CEIC funding for training programs requires grade 10 graduation as a pre-requisite. As one counsellor put it, "You don't need grade 10 to operate a lathe, you need to learn how to operate a lathe."

Skill training programs for educated disabled persons (e.g., those eligible for Mohawk College) are all too often unrelated to the job market. For example, disabled persons trained as computer programmers will find that there are no jobs available in this field.

Disabled people who accept the label "permanently disabled" in order to qualify for a pension disqualify themselves from obtaining CEIC-sponsored job training since CEIC defines a permanently disabled person as permanently unemployable. Teachers noted that many people with severe physical disabilities are nevertheless very bright and should be funded for job training.

2. Work history or exposure to appropriate work choices

Many disabled clients have no work history. Newly disabled persons who do have a work history are often firmly attached to the job with which they are familiar, e.g., truck driver. They have never considered any other type of work. Both groups of clients have no background for making appropriate choices about jobs and wages.

The standard materials available to assist with this problem, e.g., CHOICES program of CEIC, are far too sophisticated for this client group. CHOICES, for example, requires a grade 11 education and enough independence to operate the program through a computer terminal. It focuses on advanced job choices or careers. One job placement officer suggested the need for a simpler version of CHOICES to expose disabled clients to realistic job choices. For example, a person who may not be a dentist might assist in a denturist's lab; a person who may not manage a donut shop, may make donuts in the kitchen. Currently, time-consuming, individual arrangements have to be made for clients to observe appropriate work in a variety of settings until they find something that motivates them.

3. Life skills, daily living skills, and social skills

Often is it not the disability itself, but the attendant lack of life skills, daily living skills, and/or social skills that prevents job placement. Poor hygiene or a peculiar behaviour are unacceptable to employers.

All of these problems can be modified in training programs. No one funds such programs. These skills have to be taught on the side in other programs. They often require more intensive treatment. Funding for short, intensive behaviour modification programs could be the answer.

4. Multiple handicaps

People with multiple handicaps do not fit in anywhere. Prime amongst these is a psychiatric problem in combination with another disability, e.g., developmental or physical handicap. Physically disabled persons who are developmentally handicapped are also misfits. Programs are not designed to allow entry to persons with multiple handicaps. They gain entry only through the goodwill of program administrators.

5. Transportation and housing

These traditional problems of the disabled have not been sufficiently alleviated by recent, enlightened social policies. Many disabled people are still unable to guarantee an employer that they can get to work regularly, on-time. Limited choices in housing exacerbate the transportation problem. It is not always possible to live close to the work site.

B. SUMMARY

The issue is job preparation. It is the lack of programs that recognize all of the attendant problems of a disability. The Community Council on the Employment of the Disabled may find it within its mandate to lobby for changes in the mandate and funding mechanisms of programs to support essential job preparation needs of disabled clients before they present themselves for job placement.

LIST OF RESPONDENTS

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Appendix

LIST OF RESPONDENTS

We wish to acknowledge the following organizations and their representatives who took the time to engage in lively discussions of issues related to the job placement of disabled persons in Hamilton.

CEIC	Canada Employment and Immigration Commission	Tony Busseri
PATH	Placement Assistance for the Trained Handicapped	June Kertyzia
CAG	Citizens' Action Group	Patti Sterling
Chedoke	Vocational Assessment Unit	Rhoda Henderson
VRS	Vocational Rehabilitation Service, Ministry of Community and Social Services	Helmut Koesempel
WCB	Workers' Compensation Board	Klaus Henkenhoff
CHS	Canadian Hearing Society	Ginny Glover
THAT	Training the Handicapped Adult in Transition, Mohawk College	Muriel Westmoreland Suzanne Clancy
ETC	Employment Training Centre, Association for the Mentally Retarded	Ray Dingledine
Amity	Goodwill Industries	Sandy Sihaido
PUSH	People United for Self Help	Mike McHenry
BOOST	Blind Organization of Ontario with Self Help Tactics	Bob Smith
Labour	United Way Labour Coordinator	Bryan Rushton
Employer	Westinghouse Canada Inc.	Rob Webb



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